Koasati language

Koasati (also **Coushatta**) is a Native American language of Muskogean origin. The language is spoken by the Coushatta people, most of whom live in Allen Parish north of the town of Elton, Louisiana, though a smaller number share a reservation near Livingston, Texas, with the Alabama people. In 1991, linguist Geoffrey Kimball estimated the number of speakers of the language at around 400 people, of whom approximately 350 live in Louisiana.[3] The exact number of current speakers is unclear, but Coushatta Tribe officials claim that most tribe members over 20 speak Koasati.[4] In 2007, the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, in collaboration with McNeese State University and the College of William and Mary, began the Koasati (Coushatta) Language Project as a part of broader language revitalization efforts with National Science Foundation grant money under the Documenting Endangered Languages program.[4][5]

Koasati is most closely related to the Alabama language but, though the Coushatta and Alabama have historically lived near each other, their languages are no longer mutually intelligible without extensive exposure. The language is also related to the Mikasuki language; some native speakers of Coushatta report they can understand Mikasuki without previous exposure to the language.

Koasati	
Kowassá:ti	
Native to	United States
Region	Elton, Louisiana and Livingston, Texas
Ethnicity	Koasati people
Native speakers	approx. 370 (2015 census)[1]

Language family	Muskogean
	
	• Eastern
	
	  • Alabama–Koasati
	
	    • **Koasati**

Language codes	
ISO 639-3	cku
Glottolog	koas1236 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/koas1236)[2]

Contents

Phonology

Vowels

Koasati has three vowels, all of which occur as short and long and can be nasalized. The following chart is based on Kimball's work. Kimball describes what is normally the close-mid back vowel /o/ as "high back" vowel, hence its placement in the chart below.[6] He notes that /o/ sometimes has the allophone [u] and is raised to [ʊ] in closed word-final syllables.

	Short			Long		
	Front	**Central**	**Back**	**Front**	**Central**	**Back**
High (close)	i		o	iː		oː
Low (open)		a			aː	

In 2007, the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana developed and approved its own orthographic system.[7] In this system, long vowels are written by doubling the vowel (e.g., [aː] as *aa*), and nasalized vowels are underlined (e.g., [õ] or [ǫ] as *o̲*).

Vowel length in Koasati can be contrastive. For example, vowel length distinguishes meaning for *palana* "bean" and *palaana* "plate", as well as *choba* "big" and *chooba* "horse". Vowel nasalization most often occurs word-finally as a phrase-terminal marker. In Koasati, the end of a phrase is basically marked by either deletion of the final unaccented vowel or the nasalization of the final vowel when deleting it would eliminate phonological information relevant to the phrase's meaning. For example, the final vowel in *hopoonilaho̲* "he/she will cook it" is nasalized instead of deleted, and therefore is distinguished from the more emphatic *hopoonilaha̲*, where the irrealis future suffix *-laha-* indicates that the action will certainly occur, whereas the irrealis future suffix *-laho-* does not provide such certainty.

Consonants

Koasati has the consonants given in the table below, based on Geoffrey Kimball's work.[8] IPA transcriptions occur in brackets when different from the orthography provided by Kimball.

		Labial	Dental	Palato-alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Stop	plain	**p** [pʰ]	**t** [tʰ]	**c** [t͡ʃʰ]	**k** [kʰ]	**ʼ** [ʔ]
	voiced	**b**				
Fricative	plain	**f** [ɸ]	**th** [ɬ]	**s**		**h** [h]
	voiced					**h** [ɦ]
Nasal		**m**	**n**			
Lateral			**l**			
Glide		**w**		**y** [j]		

Not included in this chart is a glottal glide (marked ꞉) that Kimball uses in his own consonant chart, presumably to represent the lengthened vowel sounds of Koasati. In the Tribe's official orthography, the [ɬ] is represented by ⟨th⟩ and the [t͡ʃ] is represented by ⟨ch⟩, with no distinction for aspiration. Additionally, Kimball notes that /p/, /t/, and /k/ are aspirated in initial and medial positions. However, the website for the Koasati Language Project explicitly states that these consonants are never aspirated.[9] The [ɦ] occurs most often before [t͡ʃ], as in [haɦt͡ʃí] "river", spelled ⟨hahchi⟩ in the official orthography, thereby distinguished from ⟨hachi⟩ "tail".

Syllable structure

Koasati has both light (CV, VC, V) and heavy (CVC) syllables. Consonant clusters occur across syllables but not within. All monomorphemic Koasati words end in light syllables, while the penultimate syllable can be light but is usually heavy, and it is usually preceded by one or more light syllables, as with the construction CV.CVC.CV as in the word *holihtá* "fence". Other shapes, in which one or more heavy syllables precede a heavy penultimate syllable (e.g. CV.CVC.CVC.CV as in *hacokpalpá* "butterfly"), or alternate heavy and light syllables (e.g. CVC.CV.CVC.CV. as in *pa:piyá:ka* "bridge"), are usually the result of the compounding of two words or a once-productive rule of syncope in which the vowel of every second syllable except the final syllable was deleted. Vowel clusters occur in Koasati, unlike in other Muskogean languages where such clusters are made impossible by metathesis and vowel deletion. These clusters occur in Koasati due to the use of locative prefixes that end in a vowel and class 1A negative transitive verbs since these do not undergo the processes of metathesis and vowel deletion. Clusters beginning with /a:/ and /i:/ are most frequent, and all clusters are generally spoken with a glottal stop between vowels.

Tone

Koasati has low [ˋ], high [ˊ], and high rising–falling [ˇ] pitch accents, as well as a fourth unmarked mid-level tone. All noun roots must have one high-pitch accented syllable. The location of the accent depends on the properties of the penultimate syllable. With a few exceptions, the accent falls on the final syllable unless the penultimate syllable contains a long vowel. These pitch accents can be contrastive, as with *sakihpǫ́* 'It is a mink.' and *sakíhpǫ* 'It is not air-dried.'. Pitch placement on verbs is motivated by morphology. Most indicative verbs take the high accent, though a few take the low accent. Intensive verbs take the high rising–falling accent.

Phonological processes

- /c/ in Kimball's orthography, or /ch/ in the official Tribe orthography, is sometimes realized as [ts] before resonants: cf. *awó yáhci* "it is just like grandpa" is realized as [awó yahtsi].

- In rare cases, /k/ is labialized to [kʷ] before /o/: cf. *akkó* "that" → [akkʷó]
- /s/ has the palatal allophone [š] word-initially before /o/ and intervocalically: cf. *sopátlit* "she cleaned it" → [šopátlit]
- When /s/ occurs both before and after a vowel, the allophone of the first /s/ harmonizes with that of the second. For example, *sóslit* ('he skinned them') is not pronounced [šoslit] but [sóslit].
- Rarely, /s/ can have the allophone [r] when it occurs word-finally: cf. *o:támmo:s* "it is just sunset" → [o:támmo:r]
- In the word-final position, /h/ becomes a voiceless continuation of the vowel it follows. This can also occur following vowels in other positions. For example, *iltóhnot* "she worked" becomes [iltóónot].
- /h/ can be pharyngealized to [ħ], usually before c, as discussed above with [haħchi].
- /l/ is sometimes realized as /n/, as with *intolihná* "work" → [iltolihná]. Rarely, it is realized as [r] intervocalically.
- The vowel /i/ shifts to [ɪ] in all closed syllables, and /o/ shifts to [ʊ] when it occurs in closed word-final syllables: cf. *hókfit* "she put it on" → [hókfɪt]; *íkbot* "he did not kill it" → [íkbʊt]
- The vowels /i/ and /o/ also rarely have the allophones [ɛ] and [u] respectively, though the underlying reason is unclear: cf. *yilahá* "orange (fruit)" → [yɛlahá]; *solitá:wa* "soldier" → [sulitá:wa]

Morphology

Koasati is a polysynthetic language with fairly extensive verbal prefixing and suffixing.

Nouns

Two sets of prefixes mark noun possession in Koasati. The *am*-set generally identifies alienable possession and a relatively small set of kinship terms and body parts, while the *ca*-set identifies inalienable possession and most kinship terms and body parts. These prefixes mark person and number on possessing nouns as follows:

	am-set	ca-set	Gloss
1st person (sing.)	*am-*	*ca-*	"my"
2nd person (sing.)	*cim-*	*ci-*	"your"
3rd person	*im-*		"his/her/its/their"
1st person (plur.)	*kom-*	*ko-*	"our"
2nd person (plur.)	*hacim-*	*haci-*	"your"

Verbs

Position classes

Kimball identifies the following position classes for prefixes and suffixes that can be added to Koasati verb roots:

- Prefixes

- **Position 1**: positive and negative subject prefixes
- **Position 2**: locative prefix *a-*, or the prefix *ak-* which indicates action on the surface of a person (skin) or thing
- **Position 3**: locative prefixes
- **Position 4**: pronominal prefixes (*ca-*)
- **Position 5**: pronominal prefixes (*am-*)
- **Position 6**: distributive prefix *ho-/oh-*, iterative prefix *hoho-/ohoh-*
- **Position 7**: instrumental prefixes
- **Position 8**: directional prefixes
- **Position 9**: indefinite nouns *naːsi-/naːs-/nas-* ('something') and *aːti-/aːt-/at-/a-* ('someone')

- Root
- Suffixes

  - **Position 1**: adverb
  - **Position 2**: diminutive/intensive
  - **Position 3**: habitual
  - **Position 4**: intention
  - **Position 5**: ability
  - **Position 6**: realis/irrealis
  - **Position 7**: deduction
  - **Position 8**: modality
  - **Position 9**: dubiative
  - **Position 10**: hearsay
  - **Position 11**: auditory
  - **Position 12**: tense
  - **Position 13**: consequence
  - **Position 14**: discourse functions
  - **Position 15**: enclitics

Prefixes

Unlike its frequently used cognates in other Muskogean languages, the general locative prefix *a-* (Position 2) is falling out of use. Positions 4 and 5 relate to the *am-* and *ca-* sets discussed above with nouns. They contain the direct and indirect object prefixes respectively and are used to cross-reference the direct and indirect objects of verbs, as well as mark possession on nominalized verbs. For example, the Position 5 prefix *ac-* is used to mark possession on the root of the nominalized verb meaning "to photograph" in the following way:

st-ac-ahó:ba
instr-1sposs-PHOTOGRAPH

/stacahó:ba/
"my photograph" ("a photograph of me")

A sampling of verbal prefixes, in this case, specific locative prefixes of Position 3, follows:

- *itta-* "action on the ground; action in fire"

- *o:-/o:w-* "action in water"
- *pa:-* "action on a raised, artificial, or non-ground surface"
- *on-* "action on a vertical surface or in a vertical plane"
- *itta-* "action in the middle of something"
- *ibi:-* "action on the human face"
- *ico:-* "action on or in the human mouth"
- *no:-* "action on the human neck"
- *nok-* "action in the human throat"

Suffixes

Kimball recorded over seventy suffixes to fill the fifteen suffix positions. All but eleven of these suffixes can technically co-occur with all other suffixes that do not occupy the same position class. Kimball provides the following example as a possibility:

> o-st-oh-im-ilá-:ci-halpí:sa-laho-:li-má:mi-mpa-y-on
> go:&-instr-distr-3dat-ARRIVE-pl-ability-irrealis-deduc-hearsay-conseq-sw:foc
>
> im-ca-yím-ko-ˎ
> 3statobj-1sstats-BELIEVE-3neg(1A)-phr:term
>
> /ostohimilá:cihalpí:salaho:limá:mimpayon incayínkǫ/
> "They say that they all might be able to go and bring it to him, but on the contrary, I do not believe them."

In the first word, all units that follow the root *-ilá-* "arrive" are suffixes filling the various position classes.

A sample of suffixes, in this case, Position 5 suffixes of ability, follows:

- *-bá:no-* "regularly, occasionally"
- *-bí:no-* "reluctantly, shyly"
- *-halpi:sa-* "to be able to"
- *-yáhli-* "be obliged to, really"

Kimball notes that of these, only *-halpi:sa-* "to be able to" is used frequently.

Verbal number

Muskogean languages such as Koasati have a three-way distinction number distinction in their verbs, with singular, dual, and plural forms. Some of these forms are suppletive. For example,

'To dwell', in the first person, with full suppletion (singular *aat*, dual *asw*, plural *is*):

> *áata-l*   *a⟩lí⟨sw*   *ís-tílka*
> dwell(SG)-1SG dwell(DU)⟩1DU⟨(ROOT) dwell(PL)-1PL
> 'I dwell'   'we two dwell'   'we all dwell'

(The angle braces, ⟩ ⟨, separate the two parts of the root.)

'To smell' is non-suppletive *hofn*:

> *hófna-l*　　*ho 〉lí 〈fn*
> smell-1SG　smell 〉1DU 〈(ROOT)
> 'I smell'　　'we smell'

'To go about', partially suppletive (SG/DU *aay,* PL *yomahl*):

> *aaya-l*　　　　　*a 〉lí 〈iy*　　　　　　　　　*yomah-híl*
> go.about(SG/DU)-1SG　go.about(SG/DU) 〉1DU 〈(ROOT)　go.about(PL)-1PL
> 'I go about'　　　　'we two go about'　　　　　'we-all go about'

'To run', partially suppletive (SG *waliik,* DU/PL *toɫk*):

> *walíika-l*　　*tóɫ-hílk*
> run(SG)-1SG　run(DU/PL)-1PL
> 'I run'　　　'we run'

Verb grades

Like other Muskogean languages, Koasati has verb grades, or an <u>ablaut</u> system in which morphological and phonemic changes (in this case infixation and nasalization) can be used to alter the meaning of verb.

H-grade

In Koasati, the h-grade is used to create a polite imperative as well as to indicate a sequence of actions. To form the imperative, *h* is inserted before the final syllable of the verb root. For example, the verb *óntin* "to come" (singular, dual subject) changes to the imperative *ónhtįh* "Come on over!" with the h-grade (in addition to the delayed imperative suffix marked by the vowel nasalization and final *h*). The use of h-grade to indicate sequence (in addition to the <u>switch-reference</u> marker *-ok*) can be seen below:

> kowí-k icó í, h, b-ok
> PANTHER-subj DEER KILL,**h:grade**, same subj:focus
>
> on-a-í:pa-toho-˛
> loc-gen:loc-EAT-realis-phr:term
>
> /kowík icó íhbok onaí:patohǫ/
> "The panther, having killed the deer, ate off of it."

With the sequence h-grade, the last verb in the sequence takes on temporal and aspectual affixes, while the preceding verbs take on the h-grade and the appropriate switch-reference marker.

N-grade

In Koasati, the n-grade is relatively uncommon but is used to add emphasis, roughly meaning "completely" or "to continue" depending on whether the verb used is a verb of state or description or a verb of action. To form the n-grade, the vowel of the verb root's penultimate syllable is nasalized and accented. For example:

olfá-k waló, N, hl-o:siV´hco-k
SPROUT GREEN:&:TENDER,**n:grade**, dim-habit-same subj

/olfák walǫ´hloscok/
"The sprout is completely green and tender."

Reduplication

Koasati has both punctual and iterative <u>reduplication</u> for verbs, in which part of the root is repeated to indicate that an action is repeated. With punctual reduplication, the verb's initial consonant and vowel (or consonant and *o* if no vowel is present) are copied and inserted before the final syllable of the root. For example, *míslin* "to blink" becomes *mismíhlin* "to flutter the eyelids". With iterative reduplication, the consonant and vowel of the penultimate syllable of the root are copied and inserted before the final syllable of the root. For example, *molápkan* "to gleam" becomes *molalápkan* "to flash". The iterative can also be formed using the Position 6 iterative prefixes *ohoh-* and *hoho-*.

The glottal stop

The glottal stop [ˀ] is used to form the interrogative by infixing [ˀ] before a verb's penultimate syllable. Doing so replaces preceding vowel length (if present) and adds a high pitch accent to the syllables preceding and following the glottal stop. For example, /ishí:c/ "you see it" changes to the question /ishíˀcá/ "Do you see it?".

Syntax

Word order

Koasati sentences generally follow a subject, object, verb (SOV) pattern. If an indirect object is present, the order is typically subject, indirect object, verb (SIoV). For sentences with both a direct and indirect object, the order is typically subject, object, verb, indirect object (SOVIo), though SIoOV also occurs. Any locatives tend to follow the verb. Because Koasati uses the nominative case, these orders are not rigid - elements can be moved within the sentence for emphasis. Examples of some basic orders follow:

- SOV

  stilapíli-k pokkó im-apí:li-to-ǫ
  LEADER-subj BALL 3dat-THROW(sg)-IIIPast-phr:term

  /stilapílik pokkó imapí:litǫ/
  "The leader threw the ball to them underhand."

- SOVIo

  á:t-ok if-ón ínka-t wílfrid-ka ocó:si
  PERSON-subj:foc DOG-obj:foc GIVE:TO:HIM-Past WILFRED-loan SON

  /á:tok ifón ínkat wílfridka ocó:si/
  "Someone gave a dog to Wilfred's son."

Case marking

Koasati is an <u>active–stative language</u>. It has seven cases that can be used across five classes of nouns:

Case	Noun classes	Marking on noun
nominative	I, II, III, IV, V	*-k*
accusative	I, II, III, IV, V	*-n*
autonomous	I, II, III, IV, V	none
locative	I, II, III, V	*-fa*
allative	II, III	*-fon*
inessive	III, IV	*-hayo*
vocative	V	final vowel deletion

The five noun classes contain the following types of nouns, followed by examples:

- **Class I**: nouns for animate objects (*ifá*, "dog")
- **Class II**: nouns to or in which action can occur (*óːla*, "town")
- **Class III**: nouns within or among which action can occur (*íːsa*, "house")
- **Class IV**: nouns describing an area where action can occur (*caffá*, "field")
- **Class V**: personal names, kinship terms (*awó*, "grandfather")

Switch-reference

Koasati has <u>switch-reference</u> marking, in which suffixes indicate whether the subjects of two verbs are co-referent. The suffix *–k* indicates that the subject of the verb that follows is the same as that of the previous verb, while *–n* indicates that the subject is different than that of the previous verb. The suffixes *–ok* and *–on* can also be used in the same way for extra emphasis or "focus". The switch-reference marker *–p* indicates the introduction of a new topic. An example of each suffix follows:

- *nó:ra-k ɬabósli-h bánna-k híːca-t áːta-toho-ːli-k akkámmi-tik labósl-áːha-k sam, kí,:c-o-t —* "Nora tried to extinguish it, and she kept on watching it, but this being so, she was unable to extinguish it."
- *athómma-k yomáhli-n calakkí ho-káːha-hco-k —* "They called the wandering Indians Cherokees."
- *skólka im-alo, kí, st-o-n míːta-k im-alósti-tika-p —* "They were not interested in school; however, others were interested in it."

Notes

1. Koasati (https://www.ethnologue.com/21/language/cku) at *Ethnologue* (21st ed., 2018)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Koasati" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/koas1236). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Geoffrey Kimball. 1991. Koasati Grammar. Reprinted in 1994 in: Koasati Grammar. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.

4. April 9, 2009. Comments Pertaining to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Broadband Initiatives. www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants/comments/7B49.pdf
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8. Geoffrey Kimball. 1991. *Koasati Grammar*. Reprinted in 1994 in: *Koasati Grammar*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
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- Kimball, Geoffrey D. (1994). *Koasati Dictionary* (https://archive.org/details/koasatidictionar00ki mb). University of Nebraska Press. ISBN 978-0-8032-2726-2.

External links

- Sovereign Nation of The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (https://web.archive.org/web/200503240 14815/http://coushattatribela.org/)
- Koasati (Coushatta) Language Project (http://koasatiheritage.org/)
- How to count in Koasati (http://www.languagesandnumbers.com/how-to-count-in-koasati/en/ck u/)